

# THE CONDOR

A Magazine of  
Western Ornithology

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J. GRINNELL, Editor, Berkeley, California  
HARRY S. SWARTH, Associate Editor  
J. EUGENE LAW } Business Managers  
W. LEE CHAMBERS }

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## EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

In this issue is printed the new Constitution of the Cooper Ornithological Club. This is in the form finally adopted by the Southern Division, Sept. 28, 1911, and by the Northern Division, November 18, 1911.

It is admittedly regrettable that this number of our magazine is so far behind its normal date of publication. But the present editors have always acted on the principle that care in make-up is far more essential than fixed date of appearance. An unfortunate accident in the printing office has made the hazard in this particular case one requiring unusual precautions.

On November 6, 1911, the appointment of Mr. F. S. Daggett as Director of the Museum of History, Science and Art, at Los Angeles, was confirmed by the Board of Governors. The building is finished, and Mr. Daggett is now pushing as rapidly as possible the preparation and installation of the material for exhibition. Comprehensive plans have been made regarding the development of all three branches of the Museum, but readers of THE CONDOR will be more particularly interested in the details of the zoological department.

The large collection of fossils amassed by the Southern California Academy of Science at the Rancho La Brea is all to be in the building, and restorations of most of the mammals and many of the birds will be made, forming an exhibition probably unique. The material includes more or less complete skeletons of elephant, mastodon,

giant ground sloth, bison, llama, camel, saber-toothed tiger, lion, wolf, condor, eagle, etc. The activities of the museum will be first directed largely along exhibitional lines, always with the view of having the exhibits as educational as possible. In building up a zoological collection it will be confined principally to west coast forms, in fact mostly to Southern California and the contiguous country to the south. Habitat groups of native mammals and birds will be installed as rapidly as the material can be collected and prepared.

Mr. Daggett's personal collections will be deposited in the Museum, amounting to 8000 birds, 3000 species of Coleoptera, and thirty-six large drawers of butterflies, as well as his ornithological library, comprising some 1800 volumes and about as many pamphlets. Other loan collections, and some gifts are promised, including a library of about 2000 volumes owned by the Academy of Sciences, and an extensive herbarium to be installed by Dr. A. Davidson.

The Museum's Board of Governors includes one member from the Southern Division of the Cooper Club, Mr. Howard Robertson. The Club should know that the successful inauguration of this Museum is in a great measure due to his energy and industry, and must accord Mr. Robertson credit for all time as one of the guiding spirits who made possible the founding of the institution. With two Cooper Club members so actively interested in the Museum, Mr. Daggett as its executive head, and Mr. Robertson as Secretary of the Board of Governors, we can feel assured as to its future development and expansion. The Club has also cause for congratulation in the fact that this new institution, bound to develop into one of great importance and usefulness, is in a measure a direct outgrowth of the activities of the Cooper Club.

## PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

MILLER ON FOSSIL BIRDS.—California is the richest state in the union in point of living species represented within its borders, barring possibly Texas. It now seems that an added distinction is accruing, namely, that in number of fossil forms brought to light, this state has assumed foremost position. The Department of Paleontology of the University of California has come into possession of a large amount of material from the now famous Rancho la Brea asphalt deposits near Los Angeles; and previously extensive and fruitful searches had been conducted in certain cave deposits in the northern portion of the state. Upon the avian remains contained in the material from these two sources Loye Holmes Miller has prosecuted diligent research. It is our privilege to refer to two more papers from his pen announcing various new discoveries. (See CONDOR XIII, 1911, p. 79).

In an article entitled "A Series of Eagle Tarsi from the Pleistocene of Rancho la Brea" (Univ. Calif. Publ. Geol. vi, October 9, 1911, pp. 305-316), Miller describes and figures three new "raptorial" birds: *Morphnus woodwardi*; *Geranoaetus grinnelli* and *G. fragilis*. As in previous cases, the nearest related species are now restricted to South America. Comparison is drawn by the author not only with the nearest related forms, but with the Golden and Bald Eagles. It seems that of the fossil species the one bone most often preserved is the tarso-metatarsus. Miller points out that "this bone is so characteristic a part of the avian skeleton and reflects so readily the characters of the species" that in dealing with adequate material no hesitation is experienced in making specific determinations from this member alone.

The second paper bears the caption "Avifauna of the Pleistocene Cave Deposits of California" (Univ. Calif. Publ. Geol. vi, October 28, 1911, pp. 385-400). Thirty forms are listed, a few of these are not yet identified beyond the genus, the majority are apparently identical with existing species, while three are newly named in this paper. The latter are: a black vulture (*Catharista shastensis*), a condor (*Gymnogyps amplus*), and a great horned owl (*Bubo sinclairi*). Associated together in this ancient avifauna, as preserved in Potter Creek and Samwel caves, Shasta County, and Hawver Cave in Eldorado County, were, besides the species just named, a long-legged eagle, the turkey vulture, the sharp-shinned, red-tailed, Swainson and rough-legged hawks, the pigmy, elf, and short-eared owls, ruffed and sooty grouses, valley and mountain quails, a species of turkey, the crow, Steller jay and Brewer blackbird. It is of particular note that the little elf owl should have occurred in the Shasta region, when it is now restricted to a range far to the southward.

Miller finds that in these cave deposits, the remains of ground-dwelling birds predominate. This suggests "that their bodies were either brought in as the prey of predatory forms or else swept in by currents of surface drainage." Owls and vultures, of course, commonly resort to caverns as places of abode, and the bodies of those dying could have been carried into the more remote recesses by predaceous mammals or currents of water.—J. GRINNELL.

**WOODPECKERS IN RELATION TO TREES AND WOOD PRODUCTS.** By W. L. McATEE (=U. S. Dept. Agric., Div. Biol. Surv., Bull. no. 32, 99 pages, 12 pls., 44 figs. in text; Sept. 26, 1911).

This publication of the Biological Survey, following closely after the one on the "Food of the Woodpeckers of the United States" fur-

nishes considerable evidence as to the damage to trees, lumber, etc., by members of this group of birds. The paper is divided into two parts, "damage by woodpeckers in general," and "damage by sapsuckers", the latter being by far the most comprehensive. Under the first head, the kinds of injury to trees caused by woodpeckers are treated—holes made in digging out insects, excavation of nest and shelter cavities, attacks of tree enemies aided by woodpeckers, and damage to wooden posts and structures.

This section of the paper closes with a few paragraphs on the prevention of damage by woodpeckers, attention being called to the value of experiment along this line and to the use of nesting boxes and of tin as a protective covering when practicable. The first suggestion is an important one. Not long ago the statement was made to the reviewer that the placing of a newspaper in a hole in a building drilled by a flicker was sufficient to drive the bird away. The statement has also been made that the hanging of a looking glass on a string from the gable of a building keeps flickers away. Whether these statements be true or not they show what two men have found out, to their own satisfaction, by experimentation. Experiments like these need to be tried out; for who can tell but that some simple thing may prevent some or most of the damage done by woodpeckers.

The greater part of the paper on "damage by sapsuckers," is given over to an enumeration of the trees and shrubs attacked by the different kinds of sapsuckers. The most interesting part deals with the effect of sapsucker work on the external appearance of trees, on the health of trees, and on lumber and finished wood products. From the evidence brought forward by a separate enumeration of the kinds of shrubs and trees attacked, and the type of damage done, it is evident that the sapsucker damages much valuable timber so that it is rendered unfit for use. In conclusion this statement is made: "However, if only one percent of the number of trees attacked (ten percent of the whole number) is discarded, the annual loss for the whole United States is more than a million and a quarter dollars." A large number of illustrations furnish indisputable evidence as to the effects of sapsuckers.

The paper is particularly interesting on account of the fact that it is one of the first of the publications of the Biological Survey to bring forth so large an amount of evidence *against* a bird. Heretofore there has been a tendency to minimize the harm as compared with the good, even with such birds as the linnet and blue jay. Mr. McAttee appears to have set forth evidence impartially.

One point not emphasized seems worthy